

Two Focal Points in Malachi
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Introduction

The book of Malachi has many lessons for the observant reader, and much has been written about truths from this book. This present study will look at two points of emphasis that Malachi's message brings.

First is the concept that **God can and will make distinctions in the real world between the righteous and the wicked.** No believer, therefore, need labor under the burden of belief that he or she must wait until heaven to see with his or her own eyes that evil is punished and good rewarded by God.

The second concept this study will address might be termed "the flip side" of the sins Malachi preached against. We can clearly understand the profile of the society that Malachi lived in by tracking their sins. However, **by looking at the opposites of those sins, we can also accurately see the profile of what righteousness as well.**

I. Distinctions in the Real World

One major problem Malachi points out is that those who should be exemplifying the character and care of God -- His people and even more specifically, His priests-- are actually muddying the waters by their actions and attitudes. Because of what they say and do, outsiders and believers alike are unable to see those distinctions between good and evil. Hypocrisy always confuses. Malachi shows five "human" tendencies that blur distinctions between good and evil, and then illustrates them with eleven situations or practices.

A. The muddling elements of human tendencies

1. Human assessment and sense of "rightness" and fairness (as opposed to God's choice to love Jacob and hate Esau) 1:2-5
2. Human resolve ("we will rebuild") 1:4
3. Human contempt (priests show contempt for God's Name) 1:6
4. Human selfishness (offer blemished sacrifices, keeping best for selves) 1:6-14
5. Human aesthetics (judged the Lord's table as "contemptible" and "sniffed at" it) 1:12-13

B. The muddling elements exemplified in behavior

1. Priests who
 - a. Don't honor the Lord
 - b. Don't preserve knowledge
 - c. Don't see selves as messengers
 - d. Cause people to stumble
 - e. Violate the covenant with Levi
 - f. Show partiality in matters of the Law (2:1-9)

2. Corporate sin of a nation (the people who should be a visible sign of the covenant) by desecrating the sanctuary -- the visible place of God's presence (2:10-13)
 3. Individual sin of infiltrated marriages that raise questions about loyalty to God and righteous children (2:13-16)
 4. Saying that evil is good (2:17)
 5. Causing suspicion and speculation about God by saying He doesn't act or that He isn't just when He does act (2:17)
 6. A listing of sins that humans think would bring them advantage but that actually do not (3:5)
 7. The illusion of gaining advantage by not giving God a tithe (3:8-12)
 8. Saying harsh things against God, confusing others about His character (3:13)
 9. Saying it's futile to serve God (3:14)
 10. Calling the arrogant blessed and saying that evildoers are prospering (3:15)
 11. Ultimately, by not serving God they serve something/someone else (3:18)
- C. How distinctions will nevertheless be made by God in spite of these muddling elements
1. Non-natural power will overcome human power: He will turn mountains into wastelands (1:3)
 2. He will demolish what men rebuild (1:4)
 3. Human eyes will be forced to see His works and acknowledge Him (1:5)
 4. He will use even "human logic" against people ("would your governor be pleased?") (1:8)
 5. He **will** win out in all circumstances (1:11)
 6. He has the ability to curse the cheat and the priests who disobey -- non-natural resources not available to humans are His tools (1:14 to 2:2)
 7. He can curse for generations -- beyond a human's lifespan to control (2:3)
 8. He can humiliate in front of numberless people (2:9)
 9. He can cut a person off from the covenant (2:12)
 10. He can stand as unimpeachable witness for the helpless (2:14)
 11. He will send out messengers with unendurable messages (3:1-2)
 12. He will refine and purify for His own purposes (3:3-4)
 13. He will "come near" to judge specific sins (3:5)
 14. He will show earthly distinctions: "Test Me in this!" (3:8-12)
 - a. Open floodgates of heaven
 - b. Give overwhelming physical blessings
 - c. Prevent obstacles to blessings (pests)
 - d. Cause fruitfulness and retentiveness of blessings
 - e. Cause others to honor His people
 - f. Cause aesthetic satisfaction -- "delightful land"
 15. He responds in heaven to righteous acts on earth (3:16-17)
 16. He responds on earth with distinctions that people can "see" (3:18)
 17. He will burn up the evildoer (4:1)
 18. Righteous will have (4:2-3)
 - a. Healing

- b. Release from bondage
 - c. Joy
 - d. Personal victory over the wicked
19. He will exert power by either cursing, or by causing effects in psychology ("turn hearts") and sociology (family) (4:5-6)

II. The Flip Side of the Sins of Malachi's Audience

We know the profile of sin from what God says through Malachi. What, then, would the profile of a righteous person be, who eschewed those sins?

Such a righteous person:

- A. Would recognize God's sovereign ability to make choices about people (1:2-3)
- B. Would accept chastening (1:3-5)
- C. Would not try to rebuild what God demolishes (1:4)
- D. Would "see with their own eyes" and acknowledge God even in judgment (1:4-5)
- E. Would honor God as Father (1:6)
- F. Would never show contempt for His Name (1:6-7)
- G. Would regard sacrifice as an opportunity and privilege, not as burden (1:8-12)
- H. Would offer God the very best, that which is most precious (1:14)
- I. Would see God as great King of nations-- see Him in geopolitical action (1:15)
- J. Would **listen** (2:1)
- K. Would set the heart to honor His name (2:1)
- L. Would treat Him with reverence and no undue familiarity (2:5)
- M. Would walk both uprightly and in peace (unity through righteousness) (2:6)
- N. Would use "true instruction" in teaching -- no self indulgence, only truth (2:6)
- O. Would turn many from their sin -- seen as a corrective (2:6)
- P. Would preserve --seek to collate and disseminate -- knowledge (2:7)
- Q. Would be seen as an instructor sought by others (2:7)
- R. Would see self as bearing a message from God (2:7)
- S. Would be honored by others (2:9)
- T. Would seek to maintain faith with others, promoting unity (2:10)
- U. Wouldn't divorce in order to marry another spouse (2:13-16)
- V. Would constantly conduct "guard duty" on own spirit (2:15)
- W. Would speak accurately, never promoting suspicion or speculation about the character of God (2:17-18)
- X. Would actively desire the messenger of the Covenant (Jesus) (3:1)
- Y. Will bring offerings in righteousness -- the best (3:3)
- Z. Will be an advocate for others through sacrifice (3:4)
- AA. Will eschew sin and pursue righteousness so as not to muddle the character of God in the minds of others (3:5-6)
- BB. Will tithe and see the blessings from it in a physical way (3:8-11)
- CC. Will see many nations acknowledging such actions -- a sociological effect (3:12)
- DD. Will enjoy aesthetic satisfaction from obedience (includes the emotional and psychological) (3:12)

- EE. Will speak accurately about God and consequences of serving Him (3:14-15)
- FF. Will talk to others about the Lord (3:16)
- GG. No need for perfection, because such a person will be spared because of the compassion of God, not works; but speaking of Him and attitudes count (3:17)
- HH. Will see earthly destruction of wicked (3:18)
- II. Will be healed (4:2)
- JJ. Will leap for joy at the release from bondage (no bitter redemptions!) -- effects on the emotions (4:2)
- KK. Will have vindication against one's enemies (4:3)
- LL. Will remember Moses and the Law (4:3)
- MM. Will have his or heart "turned" by God -- He will superintend our emotions, affections, and relationships (4:5)